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BRAND LOYALTY IN SPORTS

Thesis

CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Business Management

December 2017

ABSTRACT

Centria University of Applied Sciences	Date December 2017	Author Gregory Smith
Degree programme Bachelor of Business Administration		
Name of thesis BRAND LOYALTY IN SPORTS		
Instructor Katarina Broman		Pages 27+6
Supervisor Katarina Broman		
<p>The aim of this study was to show how loyalty of a brand in the sports spectrum can affect that brand in a tremendous way. I also got to know how some followers chose that brand and what makes the brand so special. Why does a supporter choose to follow a brand and remain loyal to this brand? Why do some brands remain successful over the years? How do these brands keep from being re-placed? And lastly, how does a brand impact a life or a lifestyle? All of these questions helped in the aide in answering in depth throughout this study.</p> <p>This idea stemmed from a strong desire to learn what causes brand loyalty in sports. The theory that I had was that emotion and satisfaction from the brand creates a strong bond with the brand. Looking into separate sports and organizations, I was able to understand different approaches used to garner the loyalty they desired. using the empirical framework thesis I read and visited many resources to reach an outcome.</p> <p>The findings that came from this research changed from demographic. Using information on sports teams and there structure to capitalize on brand loyalty, and also sports products that want a loyal following, it began to unfold what is important. Customer loyalty and the four levels that comprise of it, help define the framework on setting out to capture brand loyalty.</p> <p>In conclusion, the findings made were close to what I was originally thinking. Emotion plays a large role in attracting and keeping sports loyalty. By appealing to the hearts of the customer, a brand or team can count on reoccurrence. Satisfaction and authenticity drives the brand in positive way to keep loyalty strong. Whether it be a team or a sports clothing brand, both follow a similar set of guidelines and structures to maintain loyalty within their brand.</p>		
Key words Attitudinal Loyalty, Behavioral Loyalty, Brand Loyalty, Consumer, Emotional Loyalty, Identification		

ABSTRACT

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1 INTRODUCTION

"You can change your wife, change your politics, change your religion. But never, never can you change your favorite football team." (Eric Cantona). This is one of the many sayings and quotes that one can consider loyalty to a brand or organization. This study is to determine the type of loyalty, whether it be emotional loyalty to the brand or a short lived lifestyle trend. In order to dig deeper into brand loyalty, one would need to focus on some key elements about what kind of brand is being looked at. What I wanted to research and delve into is the affect a brand has on the customer or in some cases supporters. This study will define what a brand is and how it maintains a loyal following.

This topic has always been interesting to me for many years. Looking into certain brands, one tends to follow and purchase the same brands day in and day out. Have customers considered changing their favorite brands? In some cases yes, but mostly they stick to what is comfortable and trustworthy. This idea has gotten me to think more about what makes my favorite brands so distinct or worthy. Honestly, no logical and reasonable answer was found other than, "just because".

The aim of this study is to show how loyalty of a brand in the sports spectrum can affect that brand in a tremendous way. Also, getting to know how some followers chose that brand and what makes the brand so special. Why does a supporter choose to follow a brand and remain loyal to this brand? Why do some brands remain successful over the years? How do these brands keep from being replaced? And lastly, how does a brand impact a life or a lifestyle? All of these questions are ones that will be answered in depth throughout this study. By reviewing statistics and first hand statements and interviews that cover the information needed, this paper will shine some light onto the brand loyalty in sports topic. Various sports news sites and articles will be used in helping with finding the answers. Certain statistics will be used when covering brand value and consumer loyalty. When it comes to this kind of study it is also important to reach out and get a different perspective by interacting with the customers and supporters to hear what a brand means to them. By engaging their emotional side of loyalty to a sport team or brand, one can understand better why the emotional bond is important. Lastly, this paper will touch base on how important emotional loyalty is to a brand or team and how that brand or team can reach out to the fans to keep them engaged.

2 SPORTS LOYALTY

It was 2006 and Ivory Coast has just qualified for the world cup. Using this stage as a platform, Didier Drogba challenged the president of the Ivory coast to end the civil war. Both sides laid arms and had a cease fire. Sports can play a huge part in society in a positive and negative way. Sports has taken the world by storm. Everywhere you look and everywhere you travel there is always a competitive game of sport to be had. It is as normal as breathing this wonderful gas called oxygen. Whether it is football, tennis or swimming, in every country and every culture, sports will either join or divide the masses. In the case of Ivory Coast it unified a country in turmoil and all stood in await of their team in the biggest football tournament in the world. Even if that civil war started back after the games it just shows how powerful the game of sport really is.

Where I grew up, in the great state of South Carolina, it is as simple as choosing one team over the other. Whether it was football or basketball. You choose between Clemson or South Carolina. At an early age every child from South Carolina was previewed to this kind of rivalry in sports. Was it healthy? I chose South Carolina gamecocks. That was my team of choice. Mainly because my parents were fans and some of my close friends. But also because some of my closest friends and family were Clemson fans. You see for me it was the need to compete with them on Saturday when the teams played. It did not matter if we were playing chess or hockey. It was Clemson verse Carolina. This brought out the best in us. I did not want to lose to the Clemson team. So maybe this rivalry was healthy for the type of person I became today. Even though the two teams are fierce and hated rivals, they also represent family and friends. It taught us to compete and also be compassionate. Even though Carolina would win and I would be a sore winner. I felt all the pain my family and friends felt when Clemson lost, because I would feel the same when my team lost. The state of South Carolina divided. (FIGURE 1)



FIGURE 1. South Carolina divided (adapted from Pinterest)

Loyalty plays a huge part in the attraction of sport. It gives a supporter the satisfaction of having their team or their brand. This loyal fanbase can create a brilliant and strong brand for a sports team. Waking up early to get ready for the game is one of the most exciting things a fan can do. That moment when you realize that the team you support and dream of playing for is only a few hours away from playing is exciting. The fact that you will be able to support and watch them with hundreds if not thousands of other likeminded individuals is truly joyous.

But how do these fans stay loyal to these teams? How do the teams portray themselves in the eyes of the supporter? There are a lot of factors that can help retain and strengthen loyalty in a brand. But when it comes to loyal sport supporters, it simply can just come down to being born with it. Sports in some aspects of life bring a certain feeling of hope. If a community is struggling and cannot seem to find a second of hope, it can take just one youth team to make a national tournament or a professional team to win a championship to give the community the hope they need to continue and fight. Sport not only brings together athletes but also different cultures. This exact instance just happened on November 2nd 2017. In Dodgers stadium located in Los Angeles. The Houston Astros went into game seven of the World Series of Baseball and came out victorious. This was the organization's and the city's first world series trophy and it came at a perfect moment in the community. Three months prior to this baseball victory, Houston suffered a devastating hurricane that crippled the city and its inhabitants. The city was underwater and damaged beyond belief. For the citizens of Houston this was a moment that defined their lives. Many lost their lives and countless people lost everything in their life. For a tragedy like this hurricane, the city needed something to lift the spirits of the community and we saw this with the Houston Astros giving hope to the people of Houston. They went up and beyond what was expected from this team and fought hard with the spirit of the city. The people of Houston got a moment in their life that gave them joy and hope and let them sit back and take a breath from all the sorrow and grief. Even if the citizens could not watch the game they found some way to listen to it. They banded together in that moment like a family and experienced a world series win with their team(Figure 2). This togetherness is what makes loyalty to sport thrive. But in order for a sport to thrive it would need to build a fanbase.



FIGURE 2. Representation of Houston fans (adapted from chron.com)

2.1 Building A Fanbase

Sports loyalty is growing mostly due to the increasing fanbase a sports team or organization has. Even if the fanbase is one hundred or one million, if marketed correctly to them they will be loyal. Building the fanbase is an important agenda for a sports organization. By adding fans and keeping them in the loop of the sports team they support they will keep loyal and excited. In the 1950's, the USA experienced a boom of sports fanbase with the broadcasting of sports on television. The steady increase of the sale of televisions in a family household was increasing and only driving the sports broadcasting up. This is represented in part in the table showing from 1950-1978 (TABLE 1). Then, sports was used as a teaching tool to embody honor, ethics, and camaraderie. These tools were not only directed at the athletes but to the spectators as well.

Number of TV Households in America					
Year	Number of TV Households	% of American Homes with TV	Year	Number of TV Households	% of American Homes with TV
1950	3,880,000	9.0	1964	51,600,000	92.3
1951	10,320,000	23.5	1965	52,700,000	92.6
1952	15,300,000	34.2	1966	53,850,000	93.0
1953	20,400,000	44.7	1967	55,130,000	93.6
1954	26,000,000	55.7	1968	56,670,000	94.6
1955	30,700,000	64.5	1969	58,250,000	95.0
1956	34,900,000	71.8	1970	59,550,000	95.2
1957	38,900,000	78.6	1971	60,900,000	95.5
1958	41,920,000	83.2	1972	62,350,000	95.8
1959	43,950,000	85.9	1973	65,600,000	96.0
1960	45,750,000	87.1	1974	66,800,000	97.0
1961	47,200,000	88.8	1975	68,500,000	97.0
1962	48,855,000	90.0	1976	69,600,000	97.0
1963	50,300,000	91.3	1977	71,200,000	97.0
			1978	72,900,000	98.0

TABLE 1. Adapted from tvhistory.tv

By including the spectators, they could feel how the athletes do from the stadium seats or from the comfort of the sofa in their home. Sports were the cause of many family changes in everyday lifestyle. In order to reach the masses of the working family, games were played either in the evenings during the week or on the weekends. This ensured that the travel plan to the games were feasible. This also meant that after school children could participate in extracurricular activities, like sports. It became a national past time to attend your child's baseball or basketball game.

With the broadcasting of games, teams could also build their fanbase to distant cities and not only appeal to the city where the team is located. My family growing up was preview to this as we were avid University of Notre Dame fans. Never having lived in Indiana, my family starting with my grandfather, were true fans. Through all the generations we have fallen in love with the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. Every Saturday was a chance for everyone in the family to come together and watch our team take the field on television. If these games were not televised it would have been increasingly harder to follow the team. Televising also helped in the Olympics as well. Countries could broadcast and show how well their team was doing to build the pride of their fellow countrymen.

Sports also took a turn and became more diverse. This branched out and could reach more and more cultures to build a more complete fanbase. In 1947 The L.A. Dodgers listed Jackie Robinson as a starter for the season. This turned many heads because at that time it was unheard of for an African American to be playing in Major League Baseball. With this, Pete Levin wrote "It represented both the dream and

the fear of equal opportunity, and it would change forever the complexion of the game and the attitudes of Americans (BHall).” This kickstarted the diversity change in American sports.

Looking at how today compares to the 50’s, not much has changed in theory. With the invention of the internet it is far more easy to read up and find information on news of the team one supports. Teams can tap into social media and blanket the market with advertisements and strategies to acquire new fans. It is also very common to have the athletes themselves do interviews or personal appearances.

In 2006, I signed a professional football contract for the local team. Being a local was a great tool for the organization because I could build the local fanbase around the team. I gave a sense of hope that if I could make it to the professional level so could others. The team would frequently send me to schools and youth communities to give trainings and to give seminars on the importance to practice. This helped the team by getting more and more youth to come to the games, in turn building the fanbase.



FIGURE 3. Charleston Battery parade and fan appreciation day (adapted from charlestonbattery.com)

Most sports organizations have fan days where they invite supporters to attend a training and see how the players act and converse with each other and the staff. In some cases there will be events in the city to attract more spectators like parades and activity days (FIGURE 3). By allowing fans to come and look at the trainings they get a sense that they are a part of the organization as well. They are able to talk strategies with the players and get to know who they are supporting. This brings the fans to the stadium

seats as well. With building a fanbase in full swing you get to see what kind of fans you are attracting. Whether it be weekend bandwagon riders or full blown loyal fans. Fan identification can break down the importance of building the sport brand.

2.2 Fan Identification

Fan identification refers to the psychological connection that individuals have with sport teams (Sutton, W., McDonald, M., Milne, G., Cimperman, J. 1997). When looking into sports in general, this fan identification can tell a lot about an organization. At an early age I learned the importance of sport in my family. Nearly every person, male or female, participated at one stage in their life in sports. This eventually gravitated to sticking to one sport or two sports if the person had the time and energy to do so. Often times we leaned towards American football more because of the strong background we had for Notre Dame (FIGURE 4). You see, each male in the family had made the decision early in life to become a Notre Dame football player. I only say the male members of the family simply because the female members knew what the chances were of them being able to play American college football, at a top catholic university in the United States. If you asked every single one of my cousins and even uncles that when they were growing up what was their dream, they would all say to play football at Notre Dame. That is just as simple as it could be.



FIGURE 4. University of Notre Dame football stadium (adapted from slapthesign.com)

But how could a whole family have this sort of bias to one team spanning many generations in the family? That is where fan identification is seen. For the Smith family we were told about how our great grandfather almost went to Notre Dame, who at the time was the greatest American college football team year after year. Not only did this intensify our love for the sport but also our love for the team. This connection with the team grew throughout the years and we genuinely believed we were part of the university program.

Sports also has a unique hold on the entertainment industry, solely on the emotional attachment of the fan identification. For example, in baseball we have the Boston Red Sox. The Boston Red Sox have not done particularly well in winning trophies as of lately or at least the last 60 to 70 years. But year after year they have a sold out stadium with loyal and passionate fans. They have gone almost nearly a century without constant trophy winning and still with high prices and an outdated stadium, they lead the league with attendance. (Keeney 2011.) Fan identification takes the marketing to a whole new level by putting the team into the spectators heart and lifestyle. A team can market themselves to the fans in a way that makes the fan feel part of the experience.

With the changing society structure, lifestyle interests and technology innovation the US is becoming increasingly disconnected from a sense of community except spectator sports. Spectator sports, in contrast, are deeply rooted in Rooney's (1974) concept of Pride in place- meaning a key expression of community identification and expression. Sport promotes communication, involves people jointly, provides common symbols, a collective identity and a reason for solidarity. Researchers believe that the level of identification with an organization depends on such factors as satisfaction with the organization, reputation of the organization, frequency of contact, and the visibility of affiliation. (Sutton et al 1997).

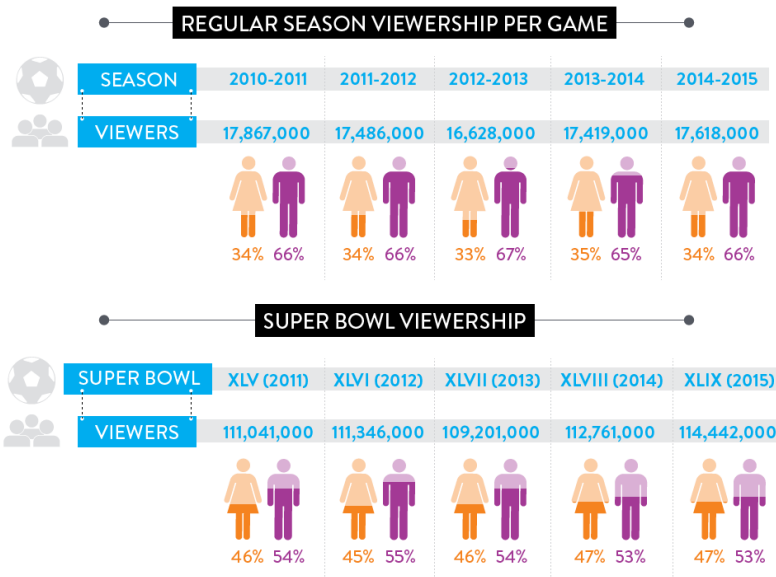
There are three levels of fan identification, low, medium, and high. Low identification refers to the spectators that are there to watch a sport for pure entertainment (Sutton et al 1997). They have no real interest vested in the game itself. They are not committed financially or emotionally to a team or sport. Usually these type of fans are more in to the social aspect of going to a game or viewing a sporting activity. For them it is more enjoyable to be around friends and what will come before, during, or after

the game. In 2011 I met a volleyball player from the United States here in Kokkola. He was here to play for the local team Tiikerit. Now I have been living here for nearly five years and not once did I hear about a professional volleyball team in Kokkola. I decided with a teammate that we would go and support the local team and watch our fellow compatriot. It was so much fun that we attended each home game and cheered relentlessly for the team. They promoted that season and we were there front row causing quite a stir. Now for my friend and I, we didn't really care much for the sport or the team, we just felt the need to support our new American friend. At the time, going to the games were just a way to pass the time. We continued going to some games the next season but rarely. For me I would classify myself as a low identifier in this case. I had no real financial or emotional investment in this game seeing as I would get free tickets to games via the player or get in for free because I was a fellow athlete.

The next level is Medium Identification. This level refers to a fan or spectator that has a limited or inconsistent association with a team or sport (Sutton et al 1997). Maybe the spectator or fan has an invested interest in a certain player or social aspect of the sport. This can sometimes mean that a fan has a favorite player that not necessarily is the best at the sport but has other attributes that appeal to the fan. Sometimes this can mean that a person can be invested with personal financial investment because they see the exposure they get and will eventually receive when they associate with the sport. Either way the fan is not fully committed across the boards. When favorite players leave or team is not doing so successfully the fan will stop following or even cut losses or pull funding and bail.

Medium identification also describes a fan that is in it for the big games. Maybe a person likes American football only for the Super bowl or ice hockey for the Stanley cup playoffs. These fans will still purchase and be emotionally active for that certain game or games but when the thrill of the big event is over so does there interest (FIGURE 5,6). For many years I have witnessed this in Kokkola. When a team is doing well everyone in town shows up to support the team. In some circumstances there are first time fans that when a team does exceptionally well they jump on the band wagon. For a city this is not necessarily bad seeing as it gives a social stimulant for the population and tourism. But for the sport it could hurt it immensely. If a team all of a sudden attracts hundreds of new fans after winning the national title, and they start spending more money on facilities and marketing, and then they start to lose, this is not good for business. This actually happens now and again in sport. A team overshoots its monetary capableness and soon a downward spiral becomes a straight slope.

NFL VIEWERSHIP



Source: Nielsen

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FIGURE 5. Super Bowl Viewers verse Regular season viewers (adapted from nielson.com)

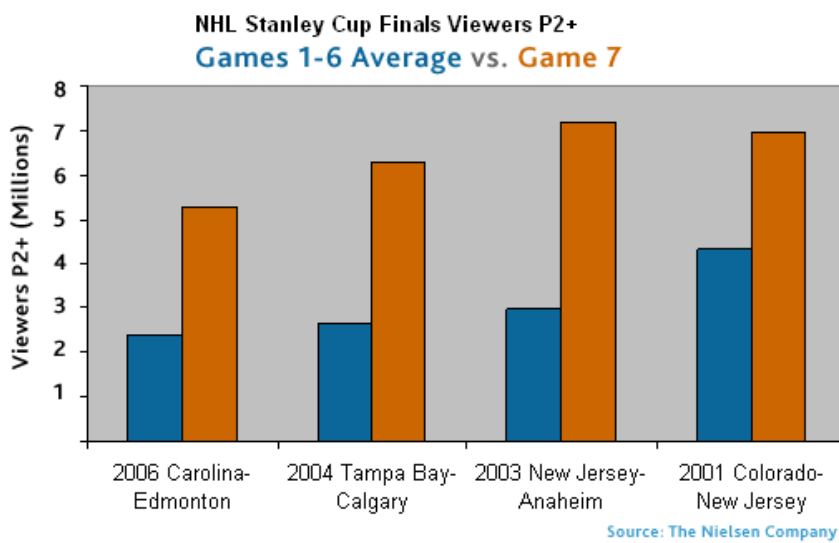


FIGURE 6. Stanley Cup Finals viewers (adapted from nielson.com)

The last level of identification is high identification. These fans are considered the “die hard” fans. We have two sayings in my household, “Once a red, always a red” and “Gold and blue thru and thru”. This means that only Manchester United and Notre Dame will be supported in my household, no acceptations. High identification refers to the highly emotional and highly invested fans that commit themselves to the sport. According to Pooley (1978), fans who strongly identify with a team often spend most of their time, free or not, following that team. (Sutton et al 1997, 17). Fans that can correlate the team and the community have a stronger emotional attachment to that team (FIGURE 7). Wann and Branscombe (1993) determined that fans that were high identifiers were more involved with the team and sport (Sutton et al 1997, 17). This involvement meant that they were fans for a longer period of time and they had a better attendance record for home and away games. This also meant that the involvement in the sports team had a monetary investment. These fans were willing to spend higher amounts of money on their team in order to feel like they are part of the organization. Manchester United has capitalized on this by starting MUTV. This website and phone app have given the customer a more in-depth look into what is going on behind the scenes. When you join this MUTV you also are given a chance to be an official supporter and when joining you receive a book of the history of Manchester United Football Club and a customized pin or plaque. The result of this is a year after year 13 percent growth in e-commerce (Tierney 2017). This proving the benefit of using a more social platform to reach the audience.



FIGURE 7. The Manchester United loyalty on display (adapted from pinterest.com)

These three levels are an easy straight forward way in determining what kind of fans and spectators a sports team has. In all my years in Kokkola I have really only met a handful of supporters that were high identifiers when it comes to sports here. These fans are few and far between. But if it was possible to convert and encourage the medium fans to become high fans, the Kokkola sports community would prosper. Of course not all fans are the type of fans that you could bring home to your mother and father. Each fan can also be broken down into two categories to determine what type of fan they are, attitudinal and behavioral.

2.3 Attitudinal Loyalty

Loyalty is not so easy to define, there are many different universal ways to define loyalty. In order to measure a fans loyalty we must first understand what gravitated them to the sport. Attitudinal loyalty is described as affective commitment or affective loyalty by many researchers (George,T.,Stavros,T. 2013). These fans have a strong attraction to the team regardless if they like what is happening inside the organization. When it comes to loyal fans they believe wholeheartedly that they are the true soul of the team. Time and time again we see this happening in European football. Each season the true loyal fans are there in numbers and are excited for the season to kick off.

In Germany, Borussia Dortmund had a bumpy past going from a European powerhouse to bankrupt. Now they are back on top. During all the ups and downs they had, the fans remained loyal and created what the football world knows as some of the most passionate fans in football. After the bankruptcy, Borussia decided to become a publicly traded company and is controlled in part by the fans. This is not unusual in Germany or around the world. But the reason it is more relevant now is the amount of passionate fans that remained loyal thru all the hard times they faced. In Signal Iduna Park, the largest stadium in Germany, the fans make themselves heard and seen in an area called the yellow wall. This is very famous as an area that is known for letting opposing teams or even their own team know how they feel. They do not shy from controversy and they always prove that they will never leave. After a couple of losses or things not going to plan, the fans will always be there but not the staff necessarily. Throughout the years the club has sold and traded players and fired coaches but the fans remained the same. These fans know this so it is easy to stay true loyal fans of the club. They resist a change of team within themselves because of the overall love of that club. They might not be happy about how the team is

playing or the how the coach executes his plan, but they will be there day in and day out. This attitude of the fan describes the attitudinal loyalty and the fans connection to the team.

2.4 Behavioral Loyalty

Differentiating from attitudinal loyalty, behavioral loyalty is focused on the fans loyalty to purchasing of a brand over an extended period of time. This type of loyalty focuses on what kind of benefits a brand or team capitalize on because of the output the fan shows to the team and disregards the actual behavior shown towards the team itself (George & Stavros 2013). Another way to look at this kind of loyalty is, it is when a consumer thinks it might be an inconvenience to change the brand. In order for a brand or team to keep this loyalty, they need to go above and beyond to satisfy the customer. If the brand or team is lazy or non-responsive to what the customer is wanting or needing, then the odds of the customer leaving is greater. Keeping the customer satisfied can make it easier to retain their services because of the inconvenience of change. For a local team it might come down to the fan that lives across from the stadium that is there because of a free entry or love of the sport. They do not necessarily support the team but it would be inconvenient to travel far and support another team when they get attention from one at home.

3 WHAT IS BRAND LOYALTY

Looking into the background of Brand loyalty, there are several definitions and approaches to understand the meanings. "To rebuy or patronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same-brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior"(Oliver 1999). In today's every shifting society, digital and social advancements make it increasingly harder to keep loyal customers. Society today is very environmentally aware and lifestyles are healthier, causing the brand to really earn their trust. Consumers have become more wary of what they are purchasing and tend to search the endless internet for better deals. In order for a brand to win the loyalty of the customer they must remain genuine and authentic.(Llopis 2014). In order for a brand to garnish a well-received or loyal following, the brand takes a look at what it is trying to accomplish and set its target market. When looking at a top brand like Manchester United and Nike, it is easy to see that the brand has a very loyal following. Brands now need to create experiences to appeal to the customers, which Nike and Manchester United are doing (Llopis 2014). Manchester United is a football club that is playing currently in the English Premier League. It was founded in 1878 by the original name of Newton Heath LYR Football Club. In 1902, the name was changed to Manchester United due to a winding-up order of 2,670 GBP. Throughout the next 50-60 years the club went through ups and downs in the league and financially. Then with the appointment of a new manager that focused in bringing in local youth to win games, the popularity and brand started to shift in a positive direction (ManUtd). Today the club is now worth over a billion dollars and is the biggest sports franchise in the world. This is due mainly on United's focus on establishing a worldwide fan base and vast lucrative sponsorship deals (ManUtd). Even though the team has had to make some changes on the field and in the staff causing them to have poor showings in games, the club as a business organization is still growing and has a very bright future. In figure 8: a brand strategy model shows how the club retains brand loyalty. Manchester United has successfully created among their fans a sense of pride in associating them with the organization.



FIGURE 8. Brand strategy for Manchester United (adapted from slideshare.net)

Nike started in Oregon and is the largest seller of athletic footwear and athletic apparel in the world. Nike has relied on the need of athletes and their influence to gain loyal customers that help the brand grow by showcasing it with performance.(Nike Inc.). Both of these companies have taken different paths to obtain a strong and growing brand that remains at the top of their product group. They both took certain steps to gain loyal supporters and customers that help in brand loyalty and show how the company can retain these customers for the future. At the middle of all of this brand loyalty comes a very important part, customer loyalty.

Brand loyalty has been recently categorized by two terms, attitudinal and behavioral. Attitudinal loyalty is simply the emotional attachment one has for a brand. Behavioral loyalty is loyalty status from repeatedly purchasing one brand.(Keller 2008). By using customer maintenance and marketing managers, a company can focus in on how to successfully target the customers to build their brand loyalty.

3.1 Building Brand Loyalty

One strategy for building a brand and attracting a loyal fan base is to build a strong, positive, and unique consumer beliefs about the brand or organization (Bauer,H.H., Saur, N.E., Schmitt,P. 2004). Establishing a strong brand image is important in the early stages of growing the brand. Three steps to build your

brand loyalty is inspire, consistency, and clarity (Westwood 2015). When the consumer is inspired by what the brand itself means or is doing, the consumer wants to be a part in the journey of the brand. Consistency plays a very crucial role in brand loyalty. When the customer knows what they are getting and the quality of the service, loyalty forms in the brand. Clarity in the value of the brand helps to show what the brand stands for and is trying to accomplish now and in the future. By showing the customer what you are about that is a clear way of showing that you want them for the long haul.

3.2 Adapting For Brand Loyalty

If a sports team appeals to a certain town for example, maybe the town is a blue collar hard working town and the team portrays that hard working style, this generally motivates the fans. In appealing to the spirit of the city a team can build their brand for future generations. In Houston, the Astros baseball team embodies the city in many ways (Hoffman 2017). As a city, Houston is made up of many different cultures and communities. The baseball team mirrors the city by having one of the most diverse starting lineups in the game. Because of the similarities it is easy to see oneself in the team.

As each generation comes and goes the team is changing its look to stay vigilant in retaining the fans. In 1999 the Charleston Battery, my former team, moved and built across the city to stay closer to its main demographic. This move strengthened its fanbase and appealed to an already existing fanbase. The stadium brought new sponsorships and in turn brought in new spectators. Figure 9 shows how improving the spectators' ambiance, they were able to capitalize on new demographics. The new stadium offers a large pub and restaurant and also a kids zone where they have trained professionals that are hired to care for younger children. Even though the move could have taken a toll on the brand itself, being a hard-working organization, it proved to be a successful decision in building their brand.

In 2002 the US soccer federation nominated the battery stadium as one of 7 top stadiums in the United States for soccer (USsoccer 2002). That is huge for such a small soccer town seeing as it was competing against cities ten times larger. With building the brand of the stadium and garnering great reviews, the fan base grew and is still growing today. There have been talks of the battery trying to make a push to the MLS which would most likely bring a whole new fanbase to the wonderful city.

Another positive with the building of this stadium which The Battery has capitalized on, is the use of the stadium. Along with the game of soccer, the stadium is also able to function as a music venue and

has hosted many music festivals. It has also been a popular site for food festivals and children festivities like outdoor film screenings and camps. Building your brand can sometimes be high risk and high reward, or the unwanted low reward. But in Charleston's case it was a very high risk and an even higher reward that is still growing.



FIGURE 9. Stoney Field vs Charleston Battery MUSC Health Stadium (adapted from charlestoncitypaper.com and moultrienews.com)

4 CUSTOMER LOYALTY

In this chapter, customer is always right. In other words, this chapter will help touch base on how a brand or organization can keep their customers satisfied and loyal. Explained in this will be the stages and forms of loyalty needed when dealing with the customer. What makes a customer purchase a brand and remain loyal to that said brand? When researching into customer loyalty, both behavioral and attitudinal loyalty is present and also Monogamous and Polygamous loyalty. In today's society, Polygamous loyalty represents the consumers now in the world. This meaning that the consumer is loyal to a few brands and only those brands, but at the same time is 100% loyal to none (PR). Understood by Dowling (2003), that Monogamous loyalty describes the customers that have fervent beliefs and attitudes toward a brand or organization and will buy and follow presently and into the future (Kellgren,C.,Moradi,L.,Romp-panen,M. 2007). It is common to have a consumer that shops at the same couple of places every now and then but very rare that a consumer is 100% loyal to one company.

In the case of Nike, as a brand they look at the customer first. CEO Mark Parker had told an investors gathering that, "It's our obsession with serving the consumer that sharpens our focus and drives our growth." (Petro 2016). Nike looks at what the customer values and adheres to those demands. By engaging with the customer on the various products they produce they can determine what will keep the customers happy and returning. Direct to Consumer President Christiana Shi explains how keeping close with professional athletes that use their products, they can closely monitor how well a product is received (Petro 2016). Using this info they can change and adapt to the professional's needs from the product or from a whole different product that would suit him or her better. One way they take on this challenge is the use of sensors shown in figure 10. The athlete is outfitted with small sensors covering their body and engage in their workout routine. During the workout the doctors and engineers can determine how their product is helping or hindering the athlete. After the tests are run they can determine what product is beneficial to that specific athlete. Nike has gone a step further to help the customer by adding treadmills in the stores to help the customer get the right product (Petro 2016). The idea of this is to make the customer feel like they are important to the brand and that they will get a more customized product. The more you can make a customer feel important the more they will keep loyal with the brand.



FIGURE 10. Nike athlete testing for products (adapted from news.nike.com)

On the other hand, one of the questions and theories I want to address is the loyalty one has towards a sports organization. Some of the greatest fans are located in European football. One of the many reasons if not the main reason for this is the fact that European football has been around for generations and generations. The reason I use generations here is that I have a theory that many of the supporters or true loyal fans became that way due to family ties or influence.

Growing up I was around many different sports and sports teams but only two teams were rooted for in my household because of my father. The Fighting Irish of Notre Dame and the Manchester United Football Club. The Irish are a college football team that my whole family including aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents supported deeply. Growing up into that kind of environment pushed and molded me into the fan I am today. Although I have never been to a game in the stadium to show my loyal support I have spent lots of time and money of the team from websites, catalogues and watching them play every Saturday since I was young. The same can be said about Manchester United. My father only allowed one team to be supported and we did so with such passion and enthusiasm that one would say I am a die-hard fan today. Customer Loyalty can be broken down into levels to show what sort of loyalty a fan or customer has. The levels help provide information on where the loyalty lies.

4.1 Four Levels Of Customer Loyalty

In this section we are touching base on the four levels of customer loyalty. Oliver (1999) explains customer loyalty as a commitment to rebuy and promote a more favored product consistently into the future (Heesup,H.,Yunhi,K.,Eui-Keun,K. 2011). This results in purchasing the same brand over time

despite the efforts made from new advertisements about new products or conflicting products. Four levels that can explain more of the loyalty behavior is cognitive, affective, conative and active loyalty. According to Oliver, loyalty develops differently throughout each level of loyalty (Heesup et al 2011).

Cognitive is the first level of loyalty. In this level loyalty is defined as previous knowledge based on own revelations and experiences. Individuals in this stage see loyalty as a comparison between the product they favor and the alternative based on what is being offered.(Heesup et al 2011). During this stage researchers have found that loyalty at this level is very weak and insubstantial. Often times this loyalty is labeling the first time buyers who jump at the chance to have a good deal. A company can start the loyalty base with offering a discount to draw in customers. These customers are easily attracted at the sight of cheap and discounted products or services. Still in this level a customer will move brands if there will be a better offer on the table. In order to build a brand or brand loyalty, this level can play a great part by jumpstarting the loyalty journey.

The second level is the affective loyalty. Oliver refers to this loyalty as a deeper sense of loyalty that is not easily taken granted for, or not easily abandoned (Heesup et al 2011). This is where the emotional side of loyalty comes to fruition. The customer has a chance to create an emotional bond to the product and build the loyalty the company would like. Still at this level there are problems. Even though the emotion is building, the chance to purchase or obtain a cheaper or easier product is enticing. Just because the emotional loyalty is helping in persuading the customer, satisfaction plays a crucial role as well. If the customer is satisfied and emotionally invested it would be easier to obtain the loyalty needed for the brand.

The third level is the conative level. When the customers emotional loyalty is strengthened and satisfaction is reached, the customer is more vocal and supportive of that product or brand (Heesup et al 2011). This stage explains the loyalty of a customer that not only supports a brand by purchasing or using the brand but by also promoting and spreading the values of the brand. Typically the top selling or top trusted brands retain this kind of loyalty in their customers. Satisfaction plays a huge role in this level. When a brand actively researches its customer base and determines what is needed to make the customer happy, that satisfaction is returned in loyalty.

The last and most desired level of loyalty is the active loyalty. At this level the strong desire to and intentions of a customer are carried out by actions. It is not necessary at this stage for a customer to

receive a discount, because of the emotional and strong bond with the brand.(Heesup et al 2011). The customer themselves become the brand and what the brand represents. Trust is formed in this stage and that is the strongest loyalty you can receive from a customer.

Throughout the levels it is found that they function in processes. Cognitive loyalty leads to affective loyalty, and conative loyalty translates into active loyalty (Heesup et al 2011). In order for a brand to build on reaching a more satisfactory base. These four stages identify and map out what is reached and what outcome is possible within customer loyalty.

4.2 Emotional Loyalty

How does emotional loyalty in consumers help or hurt a brand? Emotion can come in many different forms such as love, anger, joy, hate or fear (Merriam-Webster). The emotion comes from the first time being in contact with the brand. From a starting point it is unclear how the consumer will react to it in the future. In terms of a product, a brand needs to leave a lasting and satisfying impression in order to gain a level of consistency and loyalty. A sports brand as a club or organization, needs to bring emotions out of the spectators and supporters in many different ways. the first time experiencing a game needs to be that wow factor. Having a wow factor and continually delivering this factor takes time and dedication. This is one reason you see some brands that are much larger than others. the amount of dedication and thought put into day by day in a sports organization like Manchester United and its brand is impressive. They face challenges on a daily and weekly basis to grow the brand larger and more efficiently. They have many different partners that they use to bring out the emotion in the supporters. Chevy was signed to be a main sponsor, which has brought positive attention to Americans in support of United. This was a very smart move to attract the American people to be a part of the United atmosphere. Just by involving themselves with an important company for the American people, United have solidified their future relationship and support. With the Chevy signing and the summer American tour, united can appeal to a new demographic by performing in various cities across the United States. By continuing this tour they are constantly attracting new supporters and rekindling the joy of existing supporters.

Emotion doesn't come from putting a label or brand on your shirt. The emotion that they will get is that United are not only partnering with Chevy, but also supporting the American workers making these cars. This alone is a huge deal for the American people and shows the amount of spirit and loyalty. Growing up in the USA it was very difficult to find European football and watch it on television. There were no

magazines or radio shows even mentioning the game. Luckily there were few books at the library and bookstores where I would purchase or borrow for a week or two to research more about it. In the early 1990's they started showing games on TV, my first game was when I was around 8 years old. It was the most exciting thing that I have seen at that time in my life. The way the fans stood in the stadium and sang songs throughout the whole game really played a huge role in the amount of desire and emotion I have for the team. From then on, I knew that if I were going to support this team, then I would need to really learn about them and that this would be the team for me.

Why did I choose this team? Why not the team that was most popular? Why not the team that was winning only at the time? How did those fans that were in the stadium that day have so much passion? This can all boil down to emotion. At the right moment in time I was emotionally persuaded to become a fan. This can be defined as consumer neuroscience, which simply explains that emotion is at the heart of our decisions (MarketingSciUn). More and more marketing companies have been turning to science to figure out what makes a consumer choose a certain brand over another. But I felt that being a fan of such a big brand could be something totally different that cannot be measured. In that right moment of time United had just played in the Champions League final and it was electric! My young mind was racing. I couldn't stop thinking about how awesome it would be to play in this game. Throughout the game I could not help but make the decision on what player was my favorite and that I would grow up to play just like him. This game played a huge part of how I watch and follow sports teams today. The raw emotion from the commentator and the fans from United that were heard on the television enthralled me. From then on I was determined to play that exact game purely out of love and passion. This loyalty to the club will be carried on forever in me and will be on display for my children to see. Now it is up to them to partake in this incredible journey of passion and loyalty for Manchester United, but only them. Of course they will be preview of this for years to come and it will be always around them. To see if they will become passionate fans like I am will be interesting, and encouraged.

Of course there are always going to be the fans that only support when times are good and leave when times are tough. But this study looks at why the fans stay so loyal. “ “My first time in Manchester I was following my father around to the pub, the smells of pub food and chants of United songs filled the air. A short walk soon followed with a large number of fans passionately singing about the game that was about to be played. Walking into the stadium, I knew, from then on I would be United until the day I die”(DHL). For most fans this interaction with the brand will never happen. But like me, watching it at home with my father for the first time, emotionally I was taken over by what I saw and heard from the TV. That is all that was needed for me to become the loyal fan I am today.

4.3 Identification In Sports

Building a brand in the sports industry takes time and patience, and yes of course money. A new brand has a very difficult adjustment to make when first starting out if it has not done the proper research. Existing brands that are successful and continuously growing use identification to its advantage. Identification is a feeling that you share and understand the problems or experiences of another person (Merriam-Webster). A sports brand uses this to connect with the public and enhance the sporting experience to a different level. This identification can be broken down better by the Social Identity Theory. This theory is explained by Tajfel and Turner as a person's own vision of self comes from the groups in which they associate with (Hojat 2015). When a person considers them to be a part of one specific group, it is called an ingroup. Everything else pertaining to the social area that is not in that group is called an outgroup (Hojat 2015). This way of identifying has caused a competitive environment. The "us" versus "them" mentality. In the state of South Carolina this way of thinking could not be more clearly defined. On one hand you have the Clemson Tiger family. On the other hand you have the South Carolina Gamecock family. There really is not a group that is pro both, and if there is, in my entire upbringing in South Carolina I have not seen one instance. This divide is created by three processes:

Social Categorization - determination of people to a specific group in order to understand and label. Examples of this is one team over another (David 2015). A person can be in several groups at the same time. By identifying them into groups we can understand and get clarity on what kind of decisions or actions are done by this group.

Social Identification – when a person conforms to the actions and beliefs of the group he/she identifies with (David 2015). A certain emotional loyalty and bond is formed when a person can identify with a group or groups and is often dependent upon that group for support.

Social Comparison – this process is where the versus mentality begins to show (David 2015). This comparison explains why some groups view others negatively. They feel superior to different groups in order to boost self-esteem.

One sports brand, let's say Manchester United, will offer backstage access to the stadium or training facilities in order to identify more with the fans. Hoping this action will help build more of a loyal

following. Often times teams will use autograph signings and open trainings so that the public have free access to feel like they are part of the atmosphere. Obviously it is rare that every spectator that leaves the special access opportunities the team offers will be loyal supporters. But the aim is to show the loyal customers and fans that the club does care and want to share with them the overall outlook of the club. A fan that is able to identify with the players it meets and sees in an environment that is not game like situation only adds to the ability to keep them as a loyal fan.

4.4 Extension In Sport

What is meant by extension? Extension simply means a program or section that geographically extends the resources of an institution by special arrangements to persons unable to take advantage of the such resources (Merriam-Webster). In terms of brand loyalty this is very useful in order to gain and keep loyal fans or customers. For a clothing brand it means to make sure the brand is being seen in shops that are going to attract the buyers from far away. Also a good way for clothing brands to gain this extension is to advertise their product on existing athletes that are being watched and followed on a daily basis. For a sports organization brand this helps to integrate into the fan's lives. You have websites that mainly deal with what is going on with the brand and its ambassadors. A fan can simply log on and read about what the club is doing now and for the future. A fan can also get insight into the upcoming fixtures and what to expect from the team and coaches. All of this type of freedom at the fingertips for the fans helps to get the reoccurring fans and their loyalty.

With the creation of fantasy drafts, this extension program is where a sports fan can go more in depth with the sport and get to know the players more. Fantasy football for example is a game based on the user being the general manager and coach. This user buys and plays the players that will generate the most points to his roster. The players are selected through a draft within a group online. the points are given from actual performances of the players in the real football league that is played. usually this game is played by average spectators and is controlled by various internet companies. It was created in 1997 by CBS and quickly gained popularity within the sports community (Hampton 2013). The ideas of a fan being able to control which players they can play and how to set up their team is something every fan can relate to. As a fan of a sports team I often wonder what sort of tactics were used in a specific game, and If I were the coach how would I do it differently. In this case you can have full control over the lineups and squads but the excitement of how each player plays on gameday is entirely out of your hands. The sheer thrill of this game has generated around 41 million users per year. And the economic impact

has been mainly positive. The expansion of this game has caused some slight effect on spectators. With the creation of more online drafts on your mobile device, fans are more likely to follow a certain player instead of the team.

On the positive side of the creation of Fantasy Drafts, the average viewers of games have risen exponentially and fans who play the game are more likely to attend a game. The idea that this fantasy game has had an effect on the loyalty of the game is looking more and more likely. The NFL still holds true with having a very loyal following within the teams. Either way the fantasy football game has attracted fans that may or may not have been in the stadium or watching from the tv on Sundays. This was started in the USA and now has been rapidly moving across Europe and spreading fast. This is also another way to get fans excited about what is going on and it can help with a little bit of the research on how fans perceive the season and the league. All of these examples show how a brand can build the loyalty they so desire.

Other ways a sports brand can attract business and loyalty is to invest in special locations that might help with the overall outlook of the brand. In the NFL, teams will open special restaurants named after the team and the city they are in. This is gaining popularity, in that anyone can come and eat and always have the games to watch freely.

5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper helped me to understand what emotion and timing means to loyalty in sports. What I mean by this is, emotion can make or break a brand. When the brand is winning the race to our hearts, the emotion is high and hard to break. This can cause the brand loyalty to grow and prosper. but the moment the brand slips or takes a negative approach, emotionally we become detached. I set out in this paper to show how one sided sports loyalty can be in the world. In England you get a good look at how loyalty falls with the passion of the Premier league and its loyal followers. In Germany you get to see the ULTRAs in full effect. In the USA you can see how states can be divided and even families. Emotion plays an important role in how we see the sports brand and teams.

When talking about timing, this plays an important role in how emotion is built within sport. You see, if it were not for a perfect time in sport, for example that moment you saw your favorite play or player, from then you were emotionally invested. When a child or first time spectator is watching a game and something in that game or around that game occurs, this can draw them in more to the atmosphere. This can strengthen the bond to that team or organization. When a tragic accident occurs in a community, sport can shine light on how strong the community and its inhabitants are. This sense of togetherness helps generate more loyal fans. Even people in the community that were not spectators rally around what the team is doing in order to feel the social bond the city has. By including the surrounding communities in the everyday life of the sports brand or team, the loyalty is built and strengthened.

What this paper has proven to me is that loyalty can be portrayed in many different ways. For some, loyalty is showing it through monetary contributions. For others it is spectating and spreading loyalty through word of mouth. In today's society the use of social media can help determine who is loyal or not by what is said or posted. What fantasy draft and gambling has shown is that the sports loyalty itself can be weakened. Instead of loyalty being shown to a team or brand, the loyalty shifts to individual players that can generate you points. From a team perspective this cannot be beneficial. Because these fans are so invested in the players and the league itself by fantasy leagues. This effect can cause a loss of loyalty in a fan that in the past was a loyal one team fan.

In my opinion, this thesis creates a good base on how and why we become loyal fans or brand ambassadors. Loyalty is shown to be more of a customer satisfaction and emotion than anything else. From a marketing perspective this thesis can give insight on how to approach a consumer or community in order

to gain a more loyal and trustworthy following. The only downfall that this thesis exhibits is that it is written from a very bias point of view on loyalty in sports. Of course it is important to understand what kind of loyalty is found about differing brand organizations, it is also important to realize that everyone has a point of view and not all are the same.

With that being said, I understand that loyalty can come from many different reasons. To this day I am a loyal fan of the teams I support due to emotions I shared with family and friends. This emotion will certainly be shown to my kids and hopefully to their kids. When it is all through, the reason loyalty is shown is not just for the team or brand, it is all from the love of the game. Bill Shankly stated, “Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.”(Grove 2015). This idea that sport is all and everything is one of the reasons we see loyalty in sports today.

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